

# Postscripts

By JACK POST

Anniversaries, birthdays, indeed any celebration of a long and notable career appeals to almost everyone, for we instinctively enjoy success, especially if, no matter how remotely, the triumph relates to us. Years ago, Harvard in 1936 staged a Tercentenary of its founding, never to be forgotten for such happenings as fireworks over the Charles River, speeches by every prominent figure available, articles and histories by countless authorities, until every able-bodied son thronged to this particular jubilee. In 1970 the Pilgrim 350th generated far more than polite interest, especially in New England, where 1620 remains a date which we remember better than 1066, though perhaps not as well as 1492.

Duxbury enjoyed a 3-day gala in 1937 for its Tercentenary, with sports events and a "horrible" parade on Saturday, July 3; special church services on Sunday morning, July 4, followed by Commemorative Exercises on Captain's Hill; then by community singing and an evening band concert. On Monday, the 5th, yacht racing, a huge parade, a clam bake, historic house visits, filled every hour.

Now in 1983 another anniversary arrives for Duxbury, this time to note 100 years of service to the town of the Duxbury Rural Society, which about halfway along its distinguished career enlarged its name to the Rural & Historical Society and broadened its aim from simply ornamenting and improving the streets of the town to a triple purpose of conservation within our borders, of preservation of our old houses and buildings, together with memorabilia of times past, and finally of education of young and old alike in the meaning of our heritage.

Duxbury has expanded remarkably in recent

decades, doubling, perhaps tripling the number of its inhabitants, so that quite naturally not nearly as much is known of the town's background as was the case when everyone knew everybody else, their cousins, their parents, and even their grandparents. Perhaps it is just as well we are not that close today, but nonetheless, Duxbury has always been a distinguished town because it reared a line of distinguished citizens.

Starting with our Pilgrim forebears, Duxbury was actually peopled by the first generation of successful English settlers in America, and can claim 18 of the original 23 Mayflower families as living here not 10 years after the Plymouth Colony was established. Two centuries later, the town had evolved into the leading shipbuilding center of the Atlantic seaboard, constructing vessels that carried the fame of Duxbury to the 4 corners of the earth. Could a pair of such distinguished careers be matched anywhere? Hardly! But 100 years ago, the memory of Duxbury's past was fading, for with the decline of sail, shipbuilding had moved elsewhere, and the town found itself on the verge of being forgotten. Times were changing. With the Civil War over, the industrial revolution was sweeping all before it. Steam had revolutionized transportation on land and on sea, had left Duxbury a backwater, although one with a history of commanding interest.

Into this background, the Rural Society in 1883 injected a note of encouragement and a determination to maintain the standards so characteristic of the historic town. Now 100 years later, that same Society is calling up old memories and pointing the way to new horizons.

The Society has just published a comprehensive program for the Centennial Year 1083. All 850 members will soon receive their copies in the mail. For those interested, copies can be obtained at the Drew House, and will also be available at each centennial event, such as the opening Centennial Celebration on Sunday, June 26, which will include open house at the King Caesar House, the Bradford House, and the Drew House, all accessible by special trolley transportation. The Jazz Band from DHS will enliven a Strawberry Festival at the King Caesar grounds.

The Clark's Island picnic will this year welcome the shallop from the Mayflower with its crew of Pilgrims and 17th century sailors, plus a Duxbury Yacht Club sailboat regatta, and will once again feature a special commemorative service at Election Rock at the crest of the island.

In September, a 2-day seminar will discuss on Friday, the 16th, the past century in Duxbury, by our Town Historian Dorothy Wentworth; and on Saturday, Sept. 17, the next 100 years: New Directions for Historical Societies, by a distinguished panel of experts, David Case, director of Plimoth Plantation; Malcolm Freiberg, of the prestigious Massachusetts Historical Society; William Fowler, editor of the New England Quarterly; and James Bell, director of the New York Historical Society.

This marks only the beginning of the activities of the Centennial Year. New pamphlets and books are available: Franklin Hoyt's *The French Atlantic Cable, 1869*; Frederick Potter's *Tall Ships of Duxbury*; and Jack Post's *A History of the Duxbury Rural & Historical Society*; these to supplement Dorothy Wentworth's *Roundabout Duxbury*, her *Settlement & Growth of Duxbury*, and *The Alden Family in the Alden House*. Also a new cup plate depicting the King Caesar House, and a new commemorative hand-colored dessert plate will mark the year.

Although a century old, the Society remains young and vigorous. Anyone interested will be most cordially welcome to become one of its more than 1,200 individual members.

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